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FM AMEMBASSY ASUNCION  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6972  
INFO RUCNMER/MERCOSUR COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RUEHUB/USINT HAVANA PRIORITY 0172

C O N F I D E N T I A L ASUNCION 000373

SIPDIS

STATE FOR WHA/CCA DMC FARLAND, CA/VO/F/P PMARIGLIANO AND  
WHA/BSC KBEAMER

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/31/2033  
TAGS: [ETRD](#) [ETTC](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [CVIS](#) [PHUM](#) [PREF](#) [CU](#) [PA](#)  
SUBJECT: RESPONSE TO REVIEW FOR SUSPENSION OF TITLE III OF  
THE LIBERTAD ACT

REF: A. STATE 52541  
[1](#)B. ASUNCION 325  
[1](#)C. STATE 40380  
[1](#)D. 07 ASUNCION 263  
[1](#)E. 07 ASUNCION 576

Classified By: DCM Michael J. Fitzpatrick for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (U) This cable responds to questions regarding implementation of Title III of the LIBERTAD Act and the relationship between the Cuban and Paraguayan governments (ref A).

[1](#)2. (C) Has the host country, in Post's opinion, worked to promote the advancement of democracy and human rights in Cuba?

The Paraguayan and Cuban governments have cordial bilateral relations that emphasize mutual assistance. Although the Paraguayan government expresses a commitment to democracy and human rights, it typically opposes initiatives that promote the advancement of democracy and human rights in Cuba; Paraguay enjoys the benefits of a number of Cuban medical support and educational programs. Paraguay supported the removal of the Cuban embargo in the 62nd United Nations General Assembly. Moreover, although it did not oppose Post's efforts to recognize the May 21 Day of Solidarity with the Cuban People (ref B), the Paraguayan government did not acknowledge this event.

[1](#)3. (C) Has the host country made other public statements or undertaken other governmental actions?

Paraguay has not made public statements or undertaken other governmental actions in support of the advancement of democracy and human rights in Cuba. However, it has privately expressed interest in promoting democracy and human rights in Cuba.

[1](#)4. (C) Have there been any high-level diplomatic visits between Cuba and host country in the past six months?

There have been no high-level diplomatic visits between Cuba and Paraguay in the past six months. However, Cuban officials will likely attend the August 15 inauguration of president-elect Fernando Lugo.

[1](#)5. (U) What is the nature of investments that host country businesses have in Cuba?

Paraguayan businesses do not have substantial investments in Cuba, and Paraguay conducts little bilateral trade with Cuba. The 2007 balance of payments between Cuba and Paraguay was negligible according to Paraguayan Central Bank figures.

¶6. (U) Are there any bilateral trade agreements between host country and Cuba?

Paraguay and Cuba signed a bilateral agreement in 2002 to promote and protect trade and investment. The two countries also signed a convention in 2002 on cultural and educational exchanges that provides the legal basis for Cuban medical doctors to operate in Paraguay and Paraguayan students to study medicine in Cuba. Both countries are 2007 co-founders of the Bank of the South.

Cuba and Paraguay initially signed an agreement in 1999 allowing Cuban doctors to operate in Paraguay; the agreement was renewed in 2004 but expired in 2006. The only medical-related agreement currently in effect is one between the Cuban government and the municipality of Maria Auxiliadora, Itapua Department; it permits the organization Cuban Medical Services to establish a local eye care center.

¶7. (C) Are there any exchange programs between host country and Cuba?

The Cuban government offers Paraguayan students full-ride scholarships to study medicine in Cuban universities. (NOTE: Cuban programs typically last three years. Paraguayan medical students returning from Cuba face difficulties entering the local medical field because Paraguayan medical licenses require at least four years of academic study, and the quality of the medical programs in Cuba is poor. To date, 129 Paraguayans have studied medicine in Cuba, and none have received their Paraguayan medical license. END NOTE.) The Cuban government also offers paid medical travel for Paraguayans to receive medical treatment and surgeries in

Cuba, including cataract surgery (ref D). (NOTE: The U.S. Embassy launched its medical diplomacy initiative in 2006; as a counter-balance to Cuba's eye surgery program, our public-private partnership pairs free U.S. medical supplies with Paraguayan surgeons who locally perform free cataract surgeries and provide follow-up care (ref E). END NOTE.)

Cuba also provides medical assistance to Paraguay; the Cuban Embassy in Paraguay manages this program. Cuban medical experts provide training and support to the Ministry of Public Work's Epidemiology Surveillance Division. Whenever Paraguay experiences epidemiological outbreaks -- including recent yellow fever and dengue outbreaks -- Cuba offers to send doctors, medicines, and vaccines to treat and inoculate Paraguayans. The Cuban government sent three Cuban doctors to treat Paraguayans in Asuncion, San Pedro Department, and Caaguazu Department during this year's yellow fever outbreak. Cuban epidemiologists also assisted with the analysis of clinical cases and vector control efforts during the 2007 and 2008 dengue fever outbreaks.

Many Cuban doctors operated in Paraguay until the 2006 agreement expired. Although most have since returned to Cuba, some chose to remain in Paraguay but are not supported by the Cuban government. Since 2005, 36 Cuban doctors have applied for admission to the United States under the Cuban Medical Professional for Significant Public Benefit Parole Program. Of these, 15 have been approved by DHS; 14 denied; one cancelled, because she illegally entered the United States; and four have pending applications.

The municipal government of Maria Auxiliadora signed an agreement with the Cuban government to provide eye surgery and other health care to their community. Approximately 22 Cuban doctors and support staff currently reside in Maria Auxiliadora as part of this agreement. The Cuban government also donated eye surgery equipment to the municipality.

¶8. (U) POC for this request is Embassy Asuncion Human Rights Officer Michael Edwards, telephone: 011-595-21-213-715, e-mail: edwardsmg@state.gov.

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